

MSU 4.1-617
Appl. No. 10/701,879
Amdt. Dated: February 19, 2007
Reply to Office Action of January 16, 2007

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2, 4 to 7, 9 to 15, and 17 to 22 are pending. No claims are allowed.

Independent Claims 1, 10 and 18 have been amended to recite that the thermoplastic polymer has been pre-dried to remove moisture before extrusion with the metal salt, as described in paragraphs [0057], [0069] and [0079] of the specification. Independent process Claims 1, 10 and 18 have been amended to clearly recite that the temperature sensitive natural fibers are cut fibers from a plant leaf, seed, stalk or combination thereof, as described at paragraph [0062] of the specification.

The pending claims were rejected as being unpatentable over Sears et al. (US 2002/0000683 A1) in view of Hamada et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,885,340) and in further view of Cobb et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,100,320) and Sato (U.S. Patent No. 4,619,879). The claimed process has not been suggested by any of the references alone or in combination. Sears et al. does not recognize the problem of temperature degradation of natural cut fibers from a plant leaf, seed, stalk or combination thereof. Sears teaches the use of cellulosic pulp fibers with an alpha-cellulose purity of greater than 80% by

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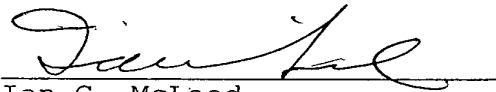
weight. Alpha-cellulose is not a temperature sensitive natural cut fiber from a plant leaf, seed, stalk or combination thereof. Furthermore, Sears et al. does not teach the addition of a metal salt to a pre-dried thermoplastic polymer. Still further, Sears et al. does not teach the two-step extrusion process of Applicants' invention. Cobb et al. does not teach the addition of fibers at all, as they would create a problem with the finish of the article (see column 6, lines 17 to 23). Cobb et al. is concerned with melt fracture on the surface of the product without fibers which produce a frosted surface in the melt at 250° to 290°C (column 1, line 45) for the polyester. Thus, Cobb et al. does not even recognize the problem, much less Applicants' solution. Hamada et al. relates to polyamides (nylon) with an ethylene ionomer resin and epoxy or carbonate compound. These compositions are molded at 280°C which is far above the temperatures of "less than 200°C." Again, this reference does not even recognize the problem or Applicants' solution. Sato et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,619,879) describes fillers (column 3, lines 11 to 34), none of which are cut fibers from a plant leaf, seed, stalk or combination thereof. Thus, this reference does

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not recognize the problem or Applicants' solution. For the above reasons, the combination of references could not possibly produce the presently claimed invention. Reconsideration is requested.

It is now believed that Claims 1, 2, 4 to 7, 9 to 15 and 17 to 22 are in condition for allowance. Notice of Allowance is requested.

Respectfully,



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